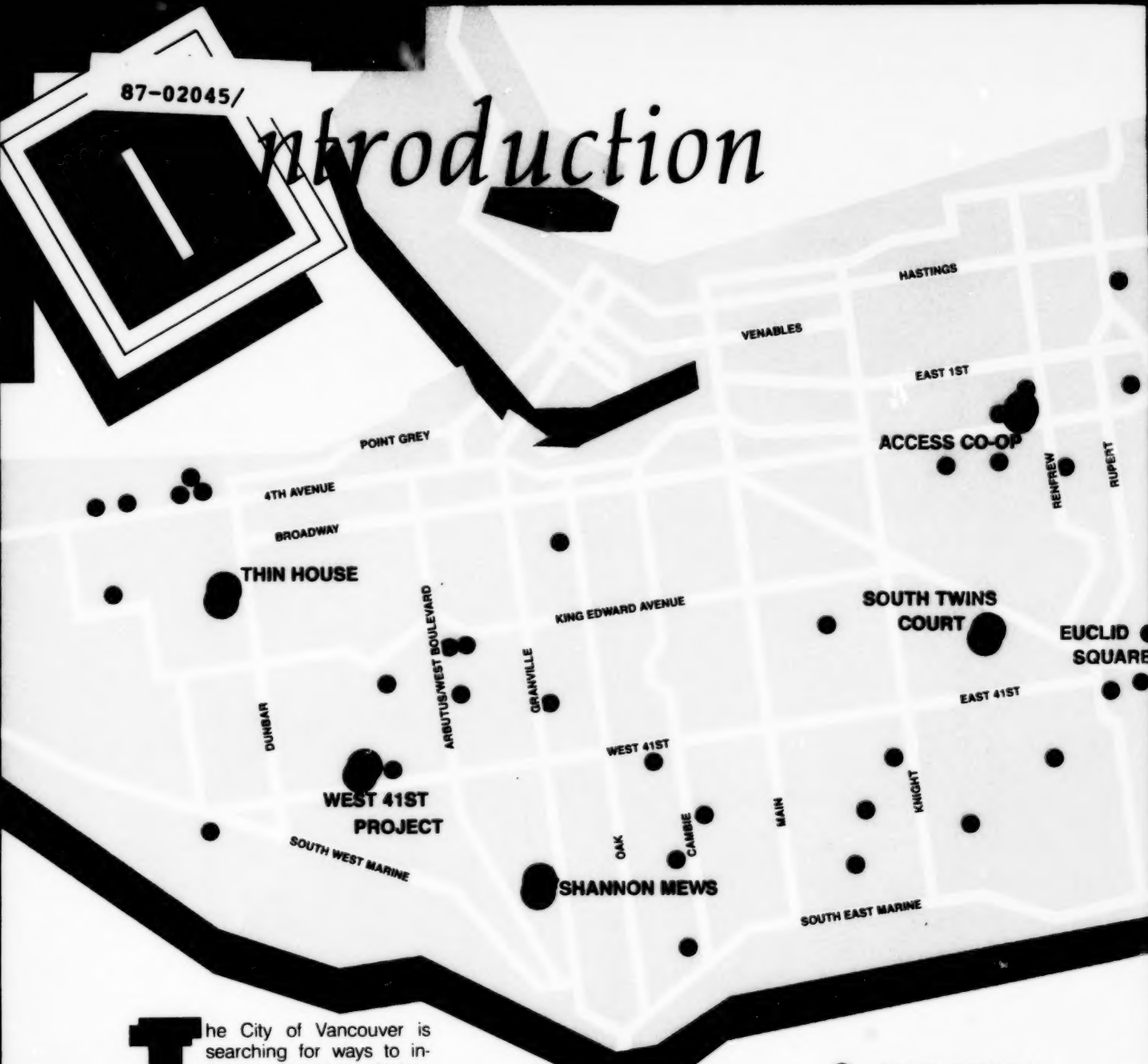




new neighbours



Introduction



The City of Vancouver is searching for ways to increase housing choice. Since there is almost no vacant land left in the city any new demand for housing must be met by increased densities. Also, the city's population is aging and family structures are changing. Couples whose children have left home, single-parents, and non-related persons sharing accommodation have housing needs different from the traditional family. These needs are not necessarily met by the existing housing stock.

One way to increase the number of dwellings and choice of housing types is to rezone to permit secondary suites, small lot infill, or medium

density multi-family housing such as townhouses or apartments.

However, when higher density housing is proposed in single-family neighbourhoods, existing residents are apprehensive. There is usually controversy about the impact of change on livability and property values. But some projects do get built despite heavy neighbourhood opposition.

The Vancouver Planning Department wanted to find out what happens after a higher density development, built in a single-family area, becomes part of the neighbourhood. Are

● Projects considered

● Projects selected for study

pre-construction fears realized? Are there ways to improve the fit between new and existing housing? If a good fit can be had, then more housing could be introduced into existing communities, thereby increasing housing choice and making more efficient use of existing services.

To explore these questions we studied six higher density developments built in Vancouver's single-family areas over the past seventeen years. This brochure presents the answers we found.

Project Selection Over the past two decades forty multi-family projects have been approved in Vancouver's single-family areas. In addition, several "thin houses" have been built on existing narrow lots which predated current minimum lot size regulations for houses.

We selected five multi-family projects ensuring that we had both east and west side locations, both market and non-market developments, larger and smaller projects, and some variation in the dates of construction. Some of the projects had generated a lot of controversy, and others less. To these five multi-family developments we added an early "thin house" which had created controversy with its neighbours.

The following pages give detailed development data and descriptions of these six projects.

Research Methods We wanted to find out what neighbours had felt at the time the development was proposed, and what they feel now. For the former, we reviewed the rezoning and development permit files which contain correspondence, petitions, public hearing minutes, and news clippings. From these sources we were able to identify the main areas of concern.

To find out how people feel today we interviewed residents of properties directly abutting the higher density developments and sampled the opinions of people living one to several blocks away. Impacts were probed through questions on design, landscaping, maintenance, privacy, parking, views, traffic, noise, people, and property values.

At least 60% of adjacent households were interviewed, and in four of six cases, 95-100% were interviewed. In all, forty-four of these adjacent neighbours were surveyed. We took care to include all who were on record as having expressed pre-construction concerns and who still lived there. We asked what their pre-construction concerns had been and if they felt the neighbourhood consultation process had been adequate. If the respondent had moved in since construction, we asked whether it had affected their choice of home.

A shorter interview was conducted

with people living farther from the projects, anywhere from a few houses to several blocks distant. In all we surveyed twenty-two of these less proximate neighbours.

To obtain alternative perspectives on the impacts of the projects, we reviewed development permit drawings, made site visits, and gathered information from city directories, census statistics, property assessment data, and project managers. We also sought professional advice from an urban designer and a realty researcher.

In reviewing the lessons learned from this study, the reader must keep in mind that we looked at the impact of new developments from the viewpoint of the single-family neighbours and not from the perspective of the project residents, who may have a different point of view.

Findings How do single-family residents living near multi-family developments feel about their higher density neighbours? We heard three replies.

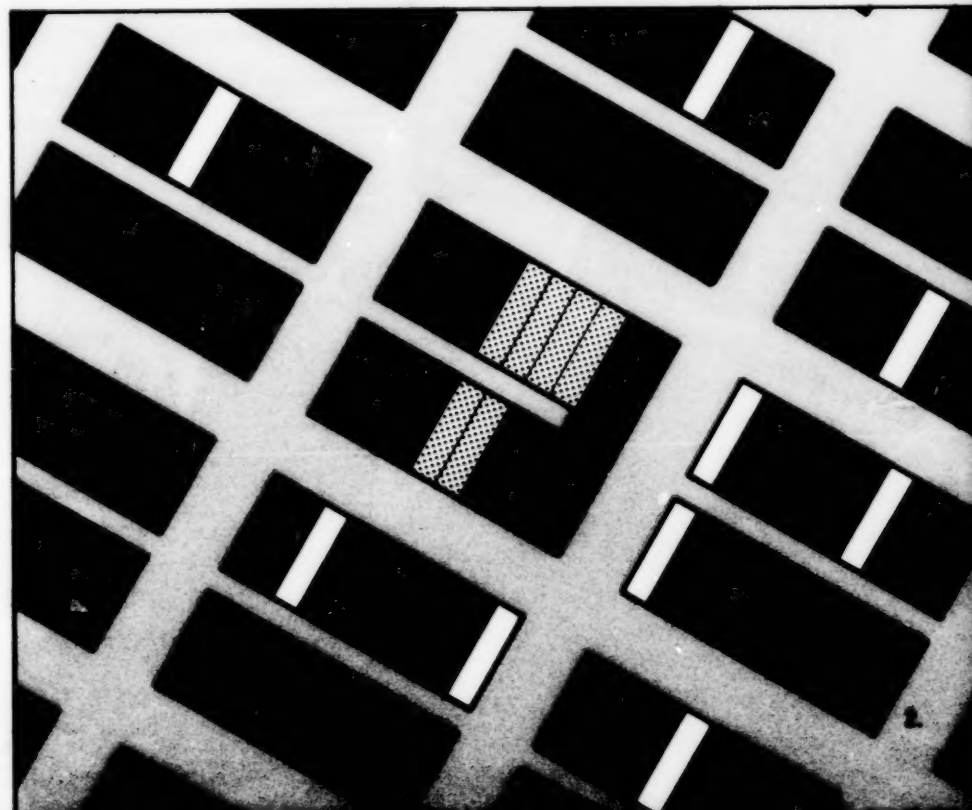
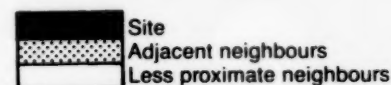
- People living one to several blocks away say the higher-density developments have little or no impact on them, though they hasten to add that no more should be built in the area.

- Neighbours who have purchased homes since the project was built and people living in single-family homes located near non-residential uses, such as shops, generally accept nearly multiple housing as part of the neighbourhood mix.

- Long-term single-family residents whose properties abut a multiple development, built in an otherwise single-family area, are as opposed to the development today as they were when it was built.
Most of the neighbours opinions described in this booklet are those of these adjacent single-family homeowners.

This booklet describes why some people remain strongly opposed to multiple housing built in otherwise single-family neighbourhoods while others accept some mix of housing types. Detailed findings are reported under the topics of **people, environment, economics, public process, and lessons** learned from our study of how some of Vancouver's single-family residents feel about higher density housing built in their neighbourhood.

Typical Interview Locations



Projects



Nearby houses



THIN HOUSE

3640 West 15th Ave. Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit Issued: June 1968

Developer/Sponsor: Walter Lloyd

Architect: Peter Wardle

Building Type: Single-family house

Tenure: Market ownership

Site area: 02 ha (187 sq.m.)
05 acre (2013 sq. ft.)

Floor area: 85 sq.m. 914 sq. ft.

Floor Space Ratio: 60

Units: 1

Net Unit Density: 53 units/ha. 22 units/acre

Site coverage: 45%

Parking: 2 on grade

Previous Site Use: Private yard

Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are located on either side of the site, as well as across the street to the north. At 5 m. (16.5 feet) in width, the Thin House lot is half the neighbourhood norm.

EUCLID SQUARE

3485 Foster Street Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit Issued: November 1977

Developer/Sponsor: Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation

Architect: Romses Kwan & Associates Architects

Building Type: Four two-storey blocks with unit entries at grade or from grade by stairways

Tenure: Non-market rental

Site area: 61 ha (6 077 sq.m.)
1.50 acres (65.415 sq. ft.)

Floor area: 2 987 sq.m. 32.153 sq. ft.

Floor Space Ratio: .49

Units: 33

Net Unit Density: 54 units/ha. 22 units/acre

Site coverage: 24%

Parking: 41 on grade

Previous Site Use: Vacant

Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are located across the streets on the west, south, and part of the east sides. A local park completes the east boundary. Across the street to the north is a large warehouse.

ACCESS CO-OP

2850 East 7th Ave. & 2829 East 8th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit Issued: March 1983

Developer/Sponsor:

Access Co-op Housing
B.C. Coalition of Disabled
B.I.L.D. Resource Group

Architect: John O'Donnell Architect

Building Type: Three two-storey buildings with single-storey units and entries at grade

Tenure: Non-market co-op

Site area: 56 ha (5 610 sq.m.)
1.39 acres (60.390 sq. ft.)

Floor area: 3 269 sq.m. 35.186 sq. ft.

Floor Space Ratio: 58

Units: 37

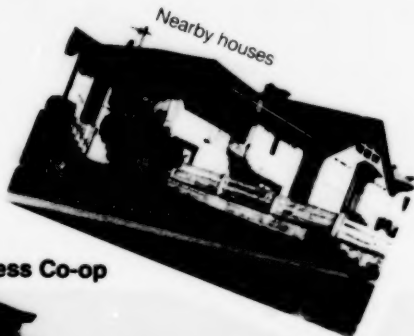
Net Unit Density: 66 units/ha. 27 units/acre

Site coverage: 30%

Parking: 19 underground. 18 on grade. 37 total

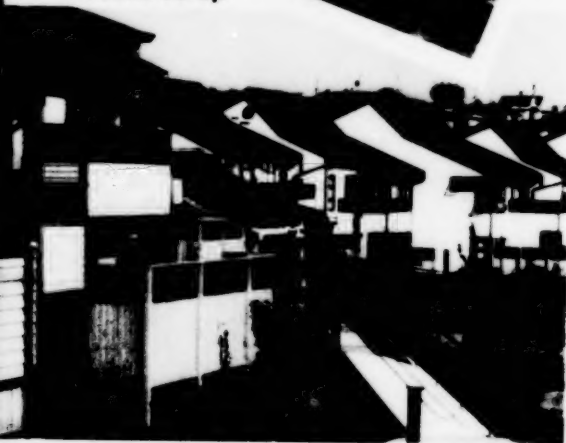
Previous Site Use: Vacant

Adjacent Development: The sloping, irregularly shaped site occupies about one-half block. Single-family houses occupy the balance of the block as well as land across the streets to the south and west. A local park is situated across the street to the north.



Nearby houses

Access Co-op



Euclid Square

Nearby warehouse



Nearby houses



SOUTH TWINS COURT

2345 East 30th Avenue Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit issued: June 1975

Developer/Sponsor: Aquilini Construction Ltd.

Architect: C.B.K. Van Norman & Associates

Building Type: Two three-storey apartment buildings with interior double-loaded corridors, plus one- and two-storey commercial along Kingsway frontage

Tenure: Market rental and ownership

Site area: 72 ha (7 194 sq m.)
1.78 acres (77 433 sq ft.)

Floor area:		
Residential	Commercial	Total
5 410 sq m	1 070 sq m	6 480 sq m
58 230 sq ft	11 522 sq ft	69 752 sq ft

F.S.R.: 75 15 90

Units: 64

Net Unit Density: 89 units/ha 36 units/acre

Site coverage: 25% residential,
11% commercial, 36% total

Parking: 81 underground, 18 on grade
99 total

Previous Site Use: Vacant

Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are across the streets to the west and south, as well as across Nanaimo to the east. Retail and commercial uses are located along the adjacent Kingsway arterial as well as on the north edge of the site itself

WEST 41ST PROJECT

2893 West 41st Ave. Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit issued: April 1976

Developer/Sponsor: U.B.C. Non-Profit Building Society

Architect: Romes Kwan & Associates Architects

Building Type: Four three-storey buildings with one-storey units entered from grade and two-storey units above entered from exterior access galleries

Tenure: Market ownership

Site area: 40 ha (4 028 sq m.)
1.00 acre (43 351 sq ft.)

Floor area: 2 274 sq m. 24 475 sq. ft.

Floor Space Ratio: .45

Units: 19

Net Unit Density: 47 units/ha 19 units/acre

Site coverage: 32%

Parking: 36 underground

Previous Site Use: Commercial nursery

Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are located immediately adjacent to the west and north, as well as across West 41st to the south. Crofton Manor, a large seniors development, is located on the east boundary of the site.

West 41st Project

South Twins Court

SHANNON MEWS

7135 Granville Street Vancouver, B.C.

Date Permit issued: November 1972

Developer/Sponsor: Wall & Redekop Corp Ltd.

Architect: Arthur Erickson Architects

Building Type: Two blocks of two-storey townhouses entered from grade, four two-storey apartment buildings (one with townhouses in one wing) with interior double-loaded corridor. Existing mansion, coachhouse, gatehouse renovated to apartments and common facilities

Tenure: Market rental

Site area: 4.08 ha. (40 837 sq m.)
10.10 acres (439 581 sq ft.)

Floor area: 21 755 sq m. 233 860 sq ft.

Floor Space Ratio: 53

Units: 161

Net Unit Density: 39.5 units/ha
15.9 units/acre

Site coverage: 26.8%

Parking: 262 underground, 28 on grade
280 total

Previous Site Use: Private Estate

Adjacent Development: Single-family houses are located across the lane to the north, the local streets west and south, and across the Granville Street arterial to the east

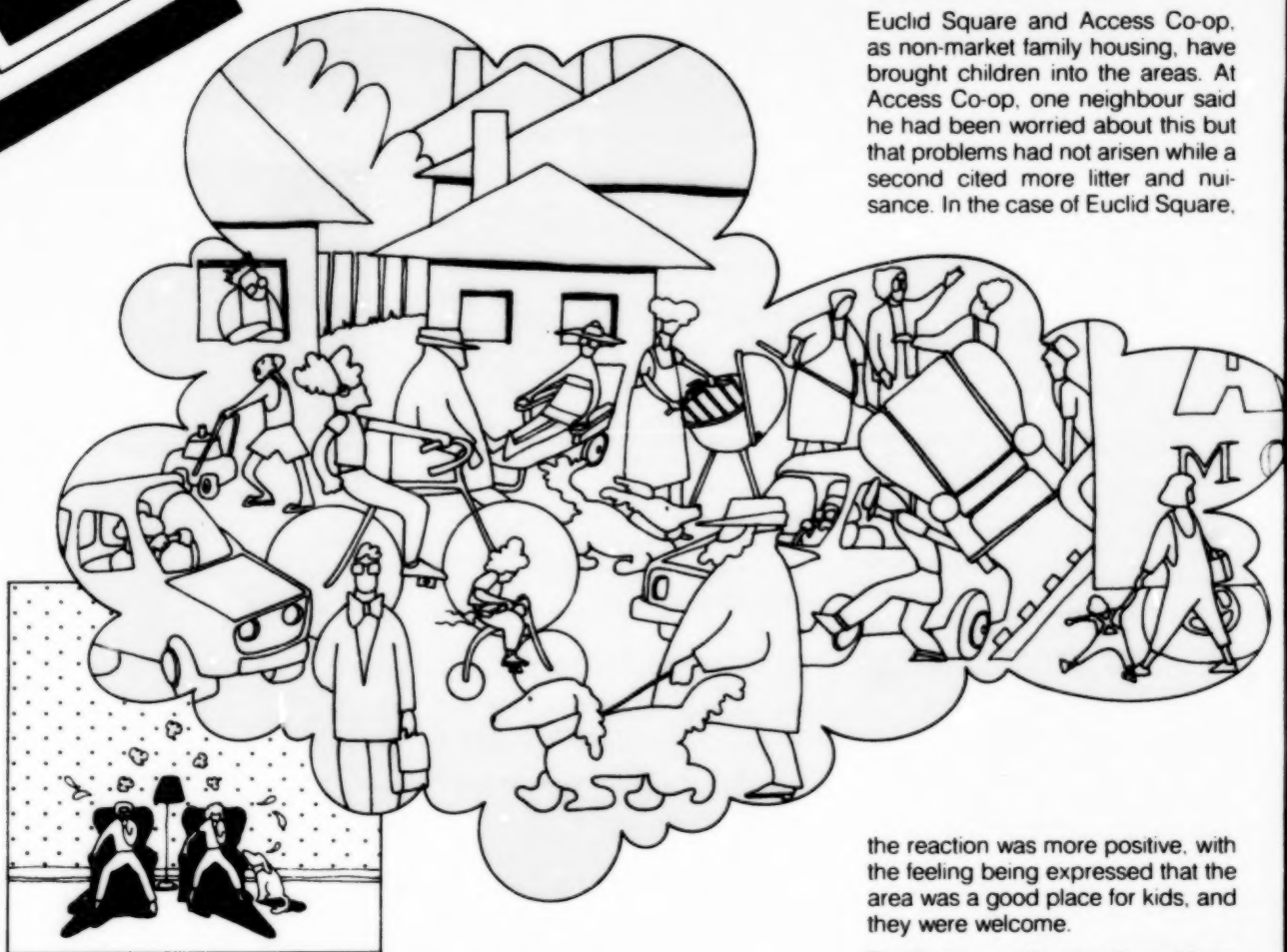
Nearby seniors housing

Shannon Mews

Nearby houses

Nearby houses

Euclid Square and Access Co-op, as non-market family housing, have brought children into the areas. At Access Co-op, one neighbour said he had been worried about this but that problems had not arisen while a second cited more litter and nuisance. In the case of Euclid Square,



Pre-Construction Concerns

5.

The Neighbourhood Today

Obviously, increasing the number of people in the neighbourhood is going to statistically increase the



Neighbours often have misconceptions about who lives in the developments.

chance of having a problem neighbour. But most respondents felt that, on the whole, one could have a problem neighbour anywhere and that the projects had had little appreciable impact.

Similar People The comparison between who lives in the projects and who the neighbours think lives there is a very interesting one. From the managers of four of the developments we were able to obtain information on where residents had lived prior to moving into the project. In the case of the West 41st Project, which has no on-site manager, we interviewed several of the residents.

At Shannon Mews, South Twins Court, and West 41st, at least half of the residents previously lived in the surrounding neighbourhood. Residents of these three projects are mainly older people who have raised

a family in the area and now want the smaller size, greater security, and lower maintenance of an apartment or townhouse without leaving the neighbourhood. Others are young singles or couples raised in the area.

In Euclid Square, a lower-income family rental housing development, previous addresses of over half of the families were clustered within a several block radius of the site. To some extent this reflects the selection policies of the project managers, the Greater Vancouver Regional District Housing Corporation, whose policy is to house needy families from the neighbourhood.

Access Co-op had a larger catchment area, with relatively few residents from the immediate neighbourhood. This is partly because it is a cooperative, which people choose because of its tenure, with location being secondary. The development is also somewhat unique in that many of the units are specially designed to meet the needs of the disabled who are drawn from further afield.

Through interviews we found that single-family neighbours are generally not aware of who lives on the site, and do not realize such a high proportion come from the surrounding neighbourhood. This may be explained by the fact that there is very little social interaction between the single-family residents and their new neighbours. Euclid Square, where interaction between children occurs, is an exception. Its neighbours say the residents are families, more or less like themselves, but

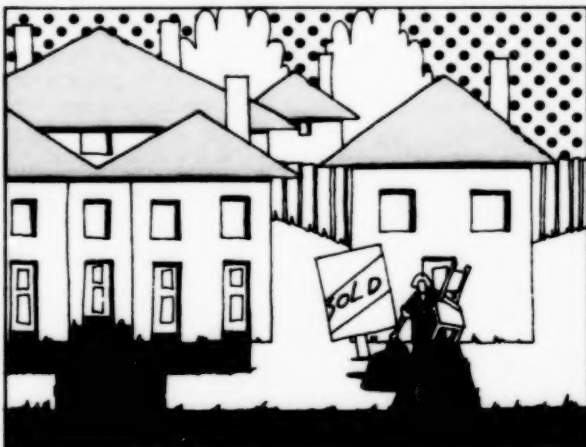
needing a little help. Access Co-op neighbours are more apprehensive and unclear about who lives in the project, even though they know that some families do. At Shannon Mews, West 41st, and South Twins Court single-family residents thought their new neighbours were similar in income level while different in lifestyle.

However, the neighbours of these projects, and Access as well, felt that the residents by and large were not "family people" and that this was inappropriate in their "family" area. Most did not seem to realize that many of the single-family homes in their area might be occupied by empty-nesters or childless couples just like those in the developments.

Generally, our respondents see the possibility of themselves ever moving into accommodations similar to the projects as rather remote. Where they do consider that they might in future want this type of accommodation, many specified they would prefer to be closer to transportation and shopping than most of these projects are.

Summary We found that most project residents come from the neighbourhood. However neighbours have little awareness of who actually lives in the site. They feel that while residents may be similar in income they are different in lifestyle — not the type of "family-people" that are predominant in the area. The judgement seems to be largely made on the basis that the housing form or tenure is different, and to be compounded by the general lack of social interaction between project residents and neighbours.

Many project residents come from the neighbourhood





Environment

house but on a site half the size of most of its neighbours.

From the standpoint of project design all are of good quality for their eras and their purpose. Two — Shannon Mews and Access Co-op — are architecturally very good. Only South Twins Court shows a lack of skill in its awkward proportions and clumsy use of materials. The landscape design ranges from adequate to

When a higher density development is proposed for a single-family neighbourhood, residents commonly express concerns for its effect on their environment. One widely voiced apprehension is that the housing will be out of harmony with the area by virtue of its size, density, lower maintenance levels, or simply by being different. Fears that the project will generate too much traffic and create parking problems on adjacent streets are almost always present. These factors were mentioned in connection with all of the developments we studied.

Less frequently neighbours identify certain specific potential impacts such as infringement of privacy, loss of sun, or view. Both the West 41st Project and the Thin House generated pre-construction concerns over privacy and sun. After living near higher density developments what do nearby single-family neighbours say about environmental impacts?

The Neighbourhood Today

Appearance and Context Before seeing the developments through the neighbour's eyes, let us view them through the eyes of a professional urban designer.

Looking at numerical densities first we find that, with the exception of South Twins Court, the projects' floor space ratios* are no higher than that allowed for single-family houses anywhere in the city. However, "units-per-hectare" measurement is two to three times that of the adjacent neighbourhoods. This

*Floor space ratio is the ratio obtained when the total floor area of all floors of the building is divided by the area of the site.



Euclid Square — old tree retained

means they are composed of a larger number of smaller units per hectare, but within roughly the same building bulk relative to site size. In fact, where the area has a high proportion of basement suites and illegal duplexes the differences in the unit-per-hectare measurements may not be as great.

However, of more significance is the larger site size relative to the area norm, and the fact that the developments are generically different housing forms. Instead of being separate, detached dwellings with their own front doors, they are townhouses, stacked townhouses, and apartments. Some of the units have entrances at grade, some from elevated outdoor galleries, some from interior corridors. Dwelling units are joined by shared walls, and floors and ceilings, into larger building masses. An exception to this is the Thin House, which is a single-family

excellent and, in four cases, care was taken to ensure the preservation of existing trees on the site. Maintenance of buildings and grounds is good in all cases, sometimes better than the surrounding houses.

What are the neighbours' opinions on these issues? We found in our survey that generally their reaction to the design of the projects as individual buildings was neutral, with both positive and negative comments. Landscaping and maintenance were seen as positive by many respondents. Given this, it is remarkable that in four cases — West 41st Project, Shannon Mews, Access Co-op and the Thin House — the overwhelming response of the neighbours to the question of whether the design of the project fits the area is that the development "spoils the neighbourhood" and "does not belong here."

If this reaction is not to the architectural quality of the building, to the landscape, or to the maintenance, where does it come from, and why are two of the projects — Euclid Square and South Twins Court — better accepted? Again, let us look at the projects through the eyes of our urban designer.

There are many different ways in which an architect can attempt to make a building fit into its surroundings, even if it is by its nature different. These include preserving some elements of the previous development or site, copying the form and style of surrounding development, ensuring that the building height and massing are not obtrusive, or simply hiding the development as much as possible.

All six projects are low rise, with only two reaching three storeys (South Twins Court and West 41st Project). Beyond this, they vary considerably in the amount of effort put into contextual fit.

Shannon Mews retains the grand isolation which it had as an estate. The old vine-covered brick wall is kept, with discreet breaks for auto entries. Generous setbacks accommodate a wide band of old trees surrounding the site. The new buildings are low key with old brick, fir and glass providing a subdued setting for the estate's mansion, carriage house, gatehouse and formal gardens which have been kept and renovated.

The Access Co-op shows a lot of effort made to bring a domestic scale and character to a large

development. The low heights of buildings which follow the land contours, staggered unit faces, on-grade front doors, individualized roofs, variations in colour schemes, and narrow clapboard with contrasting trellis and trim all contribute. However, the angled orientation of the main building masses and the sheer size and visibility of the project inevitably set it apart from the neighbourhood.

Access Co-op - low massing in area context

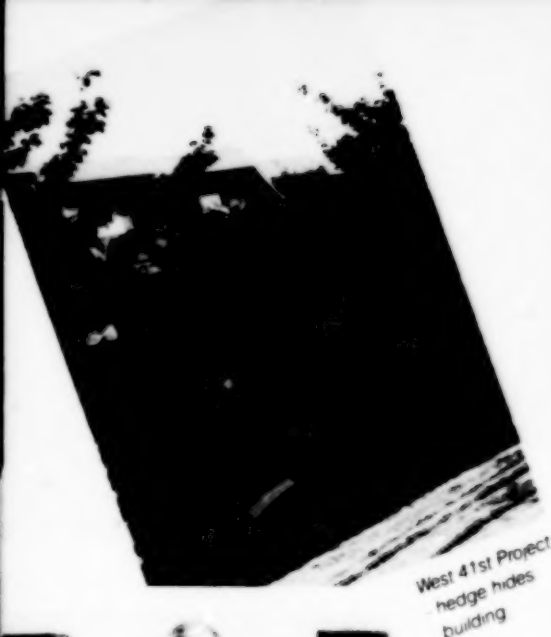


Shannon Mews - existing wall and trees kept



Shannon Mews - attractive driveways
Access Co-op - attention to domestic details





West 41st Project
hedge hides
building



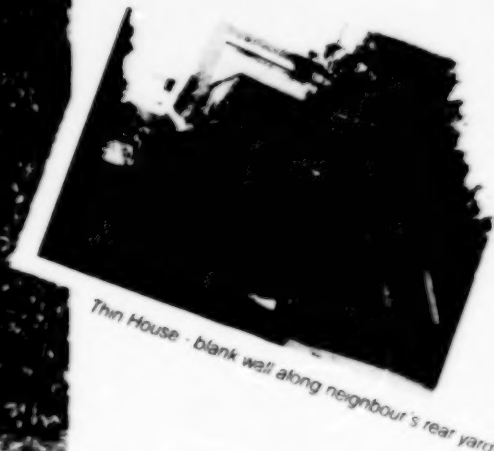
Euclid Square
- pleasant
entry
landscape



South Twins Court
- staining of cedar siding



Thin House - completely hidden from street



Thin House - blank wall along neighbour's rear yard

The design of the West 41st Project borrows little from its neighbours aesthetically or in terms of height and massing. It relies on retention of existing trees and an impressive front hedge to separate it visually. Its location on a major street flanked by a large seniors' development also means that it is not really located in a homogenous single-family area in any case.

The design of Euclid Square owes much to the demands of providing low cost family rental accommodation, and efforts at contextual design are minimal. However, its low pitched roofs, stained wood siding and white stucco are not out of place in the neighbourhood. Units are not individualized and the building orientation does not reflect the area patterns. South Twins Court, on the contrary, makes no effort at concealment, or at blending into the neighbourhood visually.

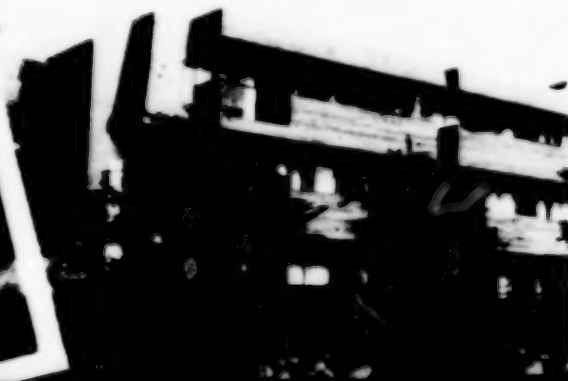
The Thin House uses the existing holly hedge and large fir to achieve complete effacement, and cannot be seen from the street.

Going back to the neighbours for their reaction to the projects, it is very interesting that the two projects which seem to have made the least effort at contextual design are better accepted. It could be theorized that a contributing factor is the degree of heterogeneity of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Both Euclid Square and South Twins Court are in areas which have a lot of inconsistency — various lot sizes, irregular street layout, and diverse house sizes and forms. In addition, both are located on the edges of residential areas, near other types of land uses such as the commercial strip along Kingsway, and the warehousing on Euclid. The residents may have a mental image of their neighbourhood which is less rigid than those living in the more homogeneous areas around Shannon Mews. Access Co-op, and the Thin House, and therefore be more willing to accept differences in housing form.

A second factor which may relate to acceptance of these projects is the perception of a number of respondents that the developments are an improvement on the previous derelict unattractive condition of the site. However, while this was also mentioned in the case of the Access Co-op it was not enough to outweigh other negative perceptions.

Privacy, Sun, and Views The urban designer's examination of the projects showed that in most cases efforts have been made to be considerate of neighbour's privacy, sun, and views. There are lapses of course. The West 41st and Access developments overlook adjacent backyards.

South Twins Court - landscape softens building



The Thin House, while conforming to all the zoning regulations which bind a normal single-family house, nevertheless creates a high blank cedar wall running almost the full length of the west side of the lot. This is visually obtrusive to the west neighbour, and blocks the sun to some degree. However, it is probably no worse than what might occur were a typical new house to be built on a normal sized lot next door.

Access Co-op heights have been carefully adjusted to maintain views for uphill houses. While South Twins Court and Euclid Square both eliminate views which used to exist for adjacent houses, the flat nature of the land makes it almost impossible for any type of development to do otherwise.

Generally, the neighbours' responses to the survey were similar to the observations of the urban designer. There were a number of complaints about privacy and a shadowing problem was cited by several people living on the north side of the West 41st Project. This was due partly to the large trees which were retained on the site as a buffer between the new development and its neighbours. View blockage was mentioned by several people living near South Twins Court, and one person across the street from Euclid Square. But they generally acknowledged that, given the flat land, it could not be helped.

Traffic and parking Overspill parking does not seem to be a problem except in the case of the Access Co-op and South Twins Court. In the first case, it may be a result of the lower than usual parking requirement allowed for social housing. Lack of parking garage security may be discouraging use of underground parking at South Twins Court.



Access Co-op - inadequate screening of parking

In most cases, the design of the parking areas and driveways is careful and attractive. Again, exceptions are Access Co-op and South Twins Court where on-grade parking could have been better buffered from adjacent buildings.

Residents around South Twins Court and Access Co-op complained about overflow parking. Traffic was cited as a problem by neighbours of Euclid Square, South Twins Court, and Access Co-op though residents also acknowledged that in most cases the problems could not be attributed to these projects in particular.

Environmental Impacts Summary

Having discussed environmental impacts of new developments on neighbouring areas, are there some general conclusions that can be drawn?

Firstly, from an urban design perspective, the projects are generally good to excellent. Several developments show careful efforts to fit into the area character or else to design the buildings so that they are not obtrusive.

Most area residents agree with the urban designer that the new developments are well designed. People living one to several blocks away say the new developments have little or no impact on them.

But owners of abutting properties, in otherwise exclusively single-family neighbourhoods, say they feel as strongly against the new development today as they did when it was proposed. Concerns have not faded nor changed with exposure in spite of substantial efforts to design projects so as to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.



South Twins Court - on street parking

It is important to remember that many of the concerns expressed in the preceding pages were issues raised by adjacent neighbours in predominantly single-family neighbourhoods.

In some areas neighbours were more accepting of the new developments. Existing residents were more likely to accept developments which improved a previously derelict site, where they can identify a specific benefit, such as a park, built in conjunction with the project, or where the higher density housing is part of an already mixed-use neighbourhood. Some single-family owners in mixed neighbourhoods said they prefer multiple housing to commercial uses.

We had hoped that this study would help us to prepare design guidelines for incorporating higher density housing into single-family neighbourhoods. However we concluded that better design does not substantially increase project acceptability. Location of multi-family housing on the fringe of single-family areas and near shops and transportation was found to be more important to community acceptance than good design.

Access Co-op - units overlooking backyards



Economics

development went from owner occupancy to rental. These gradually returned to ownership and in 1981 only one rental unit was listed. This pattern, combined with the fact that the street in question intersects Kingsway, suggests that speculative interests may have been at work, anticipating the possibility of another apartment zoning, and have later become discouraged.



Will the development adversely affect the local property market?

For most people their home is their largest investment, so concerns over economic impacts are frequently expressed when higher density developments are proposed nearby.

Will the project decrease the desirability of their property and hence its value? Will many neighbours decide to rent out their houses, or sell them and move? What will this do to the area's housing market, and resale value? Will the development encourage speculation?

Sales, Tenure Changes, and Speculation Using city directories, we plotted changes in occupant ownership for properties adjacent to four of the projects over a period of years before and after they were built. This enabled us to infer what sales activity there had been. The Thin House could not be included due to incomplete directory information prior to 1973, and Access Co-op is so new that sales patterns cannot be traced.

In only one case was there a change which seems to be related to the project. This was with South Twins Court, where in 1978 four of the five houses across the street from the

To further explore possible changes in the number of rented homes, we looked at listings for what we called the immediate area of projects — a radius of two blocks or so — for the year of the development permit application, two years later, and in 1981. Again, Access Co-op could not be included.

With the exception of the Thin House, the areas show a consistent pattern. The number of rental properties increased by from one to three houses during the two years after the development was built. All cases show a decrease again in 1981 back to roughly the same level as in the year of the development permit application. The exception, the Thin House area, showed a continuous decrease in rental properties from eight in 1968, to six in 1970, to three in 1981.

The rental patterns in the immediate area of the projects were then compared to the data on rentals available for their larger census tracts. The proportions of rental in the immediate areas within two blocks

of the projects at the time of construction and in 1981 are consistent with those in the larger census tracts.

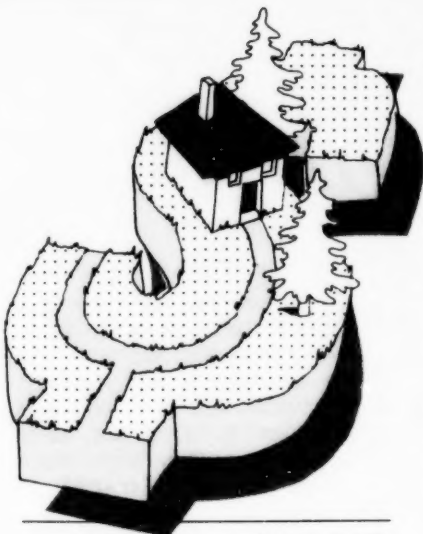
All these findings point to the conclusion that the projects have had little or no longterm effect on number of house sales or home rentals in the immediate neighbourhood.

Property Values In our survey we asked neighbours if they felt the project had affected their property values. A majority of those around Access Co-op expressed concern over lowered values as did several near the West 41st Project. While the current Thin House was not seen as devaluing nearby properties most neighbours felt that any more in the area would have a serious effect. While no respondents near Shannon Mews felt their property values were affected, several felt this was because of the unusual circumstance of the property having been an old estate and that further higher density development would have an effect.

Conversely, one respondent each near Euclid Square and South Twins Court felt the projects had increased their property value. One felt that a similar development was likely in this block, and that he would profit by the sale of his land. The other simply felt that the project was a definite improvement over the previous vacant lot which had been used as a dumping ground, and that this improvement had increased the desirability of his own lot.

In estimating what the actual impact of the developments has been on adjacent property values we looked at the assessed value of the land in 1984, and tried to find instances where a land value adjacent to the project site differed from land value nearby, and whether this difference could be attributed to the projects' presence. To do this we examined the assessment records and discussed with assessment authority staff the reasons for any variations.

Land value assessment is based as closely as possible on the market value of the land. Assessors, reviewing land sales data, establish an "area norm" for land value related to lot size. They then carefully look at each piece of property and adjust the value to account for certain factors they have found to be significant in affecting market value. These



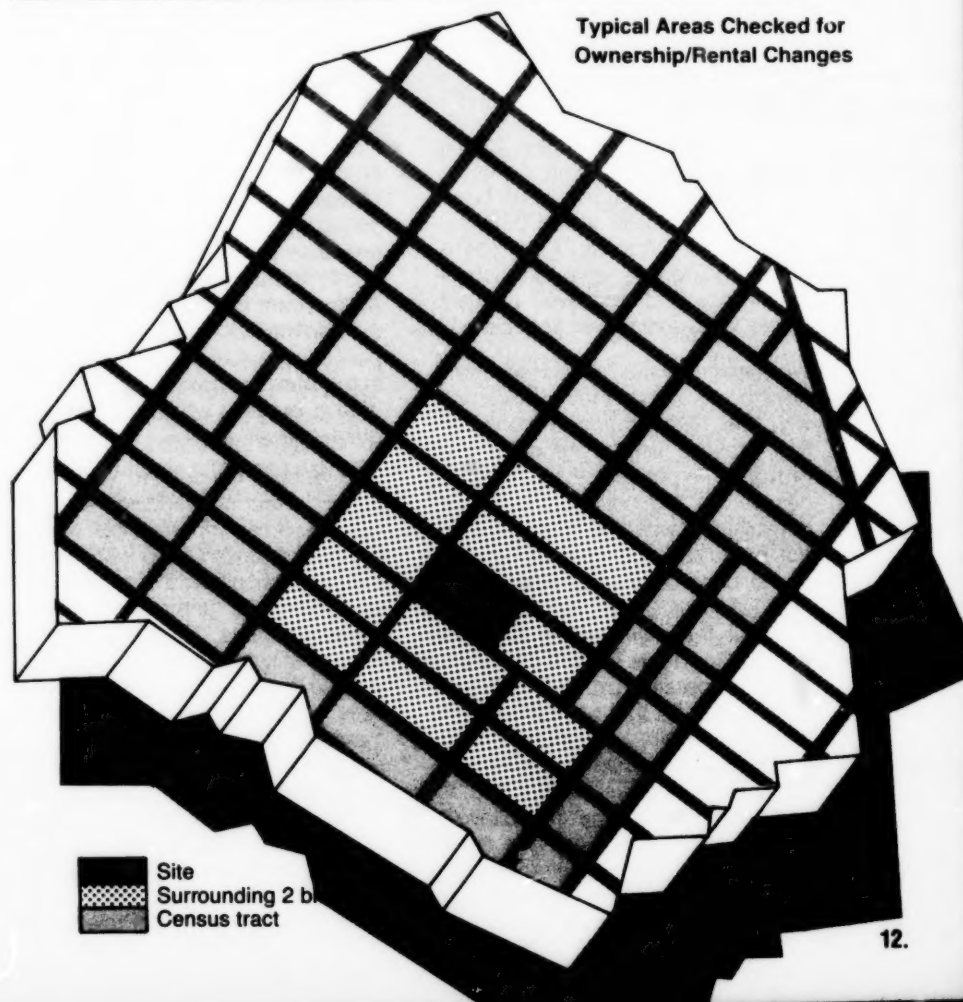
are: proximity to a busy street; proximity to an industrial area; zoning; view potential; sewers and servicing; and availability of lane access. It is noteworthy that proximity to a higher density residential development is not one of these factors. That is, it has not been found to be of significance in affecting the market value. Nevertheless, we carefully noted any examples of

seemingly different land assessments in our project areas and asked the assessors about them. In each case they were able to explain the variation on the basis of the above factors.

We also checked whether adjacent residents had filed appeals with the assessment authority because they felt their properties to be too highly assessed and found none.

These findings are in line with other research which has indicated that, while it may take longer to sell a house in such a location, the eventual sale price is not affected.

Summary It seems clear that, as in the case of environmental concerns, it is the neighbours in the more homogeneous areas who are more concerned that the projects will have a negative affect on their property values. It seems equally clear that proximity to the developments has had little or no effect on the overall pattern of change in ownership or tenure in the areas, or on property values.





Public process

The public consultation process which occurs prior to the decision on a rezoning has changed a good deal over the period of time represented by these projects. The minimum public involvement required under law is a public hearing. By the mid-seventies, Local Area Planning programs had recognized the importance of citizen participation, and the Planning Department routinely organized one or more public information meetings to discuss rezonings before the formal public hearing. In some cases in recent years, public input has been sought even earlier in the process. An example is Access Co-op where design guidelines were developed for the site and discussed publicly before the rezoning was considered.

We received varied responses from neighbours about their satisfaction with the neighbourhood consultation process which preceded approval of the projects. Euclid Square neighbours did not feel they were consulted or well informed but were not particularly concerned by this. In the case of South Twins Court, they felt involvement had been limited but they were quite satisfied with it. Residents around Shannon Mews, Access Co-op, and the West 41st Project felt that while there had been adequate information and opportunity to express their concerns, they were convinced that it had done no good, that consultation was only a formality and the decision had already been made. Thin House neighbours were also dissatisfied with the process.

There are a number of likely reasons for these responses. Residents near Euclid Square had very little pre-construction concern, and so logically would not find the public process lacking. In addition, they got a needed park for their neighbourhood along with the development. South Twins Court neighbours fought a successful battle to get the originally proposed six-story building reduced to three, and had few other concerns. The Thin House, coming in under existing regulations and not requiring a rezoning did not require even a public hearing. Thus neighbours found it had been approved before they knew anything about it, and they fought a rear-guard action. They do feel some satisfaction with the fact that they managed to achieve the retention of the hedge and tree in the front yard, and that they later stopped a second thin house from being built beside the first.

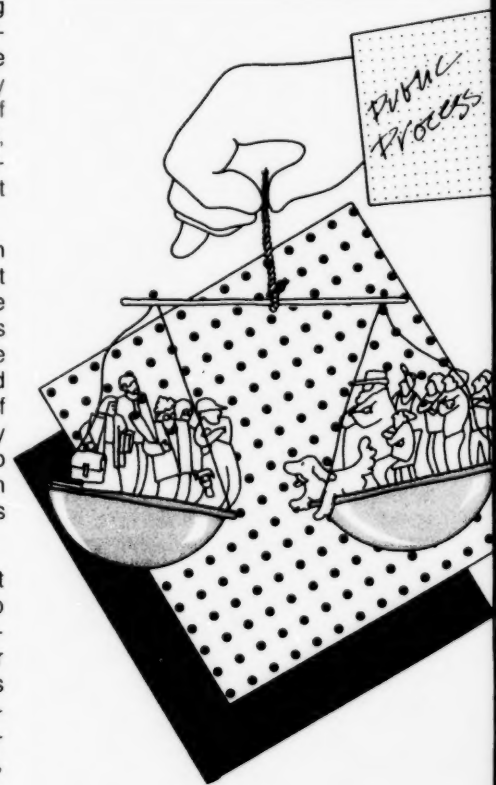
The original rezoning of Shannon Mews predated any real attempt at a public consultation process. The public fight lasted a number of years and was particularly bitter. At one point the Council of the day approved a significant change to the terms of the original CD-1 zoning without any public consultation whatsoever. So in this case the neighbours' reaction is to a process which actually was quite insensitive.

With Access Co-op and West 41st Project, misunderstandings seem to have played an important role. Neighbours of Access Co-op were under the impression that the project was to be solely or primarily for handicapped tenants. They felt the project was misrepresented. In addition, despite a long and thorough process which included the development of special guidelines for the site, they felt that Council and certain local community groups had already made up their minds to approve the project and were not prepared to listen to the objections of the nearer neighbours. Neighbours of the West 41st Project said

they had believed it to be an ongoing non-profit co-op of housing for university people, and were upset to find out later that it was a builder's co-op and that units have since been sold for high prices.

In a number of cases, we found that people believe that the "Application Notice" sign that appears on a site means the project has already been approved and that it is too late to do anything. In the case of the Access Co-op, people interpreted the drawings and model which the architect brought to the meetings as evidence that the project was finalized.

These observations on process must be tempered with a realization that in the four contentious cases what neighbours wanted was the cancellation of the projects, and not merely alterations to them. Their lack of success in this is probably the strongest factor in their dissatisfaction.



Summary Neighbour dissatisfaction with the public process is common. The idea that no one really listened to concerns or that the projects were misrepresented is at the root of much of this feeling, although the actual facts of the process vary in each case.

Generalizing about higher density housing in single-family areas on the basis of six cases is a risky business. Nevertheless, there are certain patterns which may provide lessons.

We hoped to find single-family neighbours would, over time, accept new higher density housing. What we found was that among adjacent residents, who lived in the area prior to the new development, the resentment generated by the proposal for redevelopment does not die down with the passage of time. However, countering this finding to some degree is the observation that people who live even a short distance from the project, though they may have voiced pre-construction concerns, report that now the project has little or no effect on them. We also found that adjacent neighbours who have moved in after the project was built have much less objection to it, understandably since if they did they would not have chosen their current house.

We found that although the negative feelings towards projects are to some degree associated with specific environmental concerns such as infringement of privacy, interference with sun or view, additional noise, or traffic and parking problems, this association is relatively weak since many of these impacts are not attributable to the projects per se, a fact that is recognized by most respondents. Most neighbours feel neutral about the design of the project itself, and many feel positive about the landscaping and maintenance.

The chief environmental factor associated with negative response is the feeling that the project simply does not belong in the context of the single-family area by virtue of its being a different generic type of

housing. Despite quite successful design efforts to help the projects "fit" or "hide", many respondents claim it "doesn't belong in the neighbourhood." The projects seem to assault the mental image people have of what their area is and should be.

Related to this, and adding to it, is the neighbours' lack of knowledge about who their new neighbours are, and their opinion that they are not "family-people". We found that in fact over half the residents of the projects are area people at a different stage in their life cycle. Existing residents seem to form opinions on the basis of housing form, and this is reinforced by lack of social contact between the two groups.

There is also a widespread concern that projects have affected property values, even though we could find no factual documentation of this when we examined property assessments.

Studies suggesting that concerns about new neighbours are probably unfounded are no comfort. Nearby residents are living with uncertainty. What price will their home bring when they sell? Will more high density housing be built nearby?

Balanced against these concerns are the findings that new developments meet the needs of area residents who sell their single-family home and move into higher density housing. Studies of resident satisfaction in new multiple housing suggest that, were we to study satisfaction, we would probably find it to be high.

How can the needs of families seeking affordable housing and area residents seeking smaller housing be balanced with the concerns of nearby single-family owners? Some answers can be drawn from the two projects — Euclid Square and South Twins Court — which, while not positively embraced by the community, are better accepted.

New infill housing is better accepted by nearby single-family residents if it is:

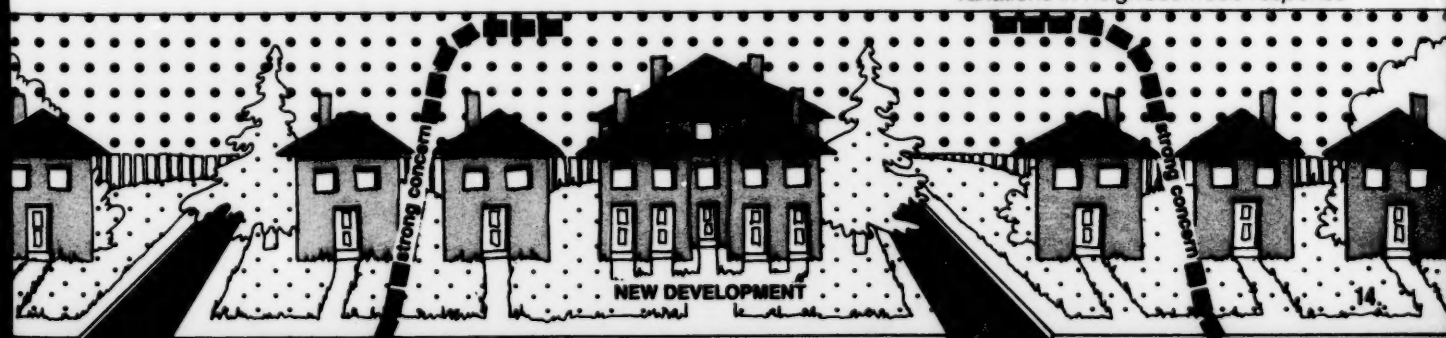
- Located in already heterogeneous areas near transportation, shopping, and other services;
- Clearly family housing;
- An improvement over previous (derelict or incompatible) uses; and
- Accompanied by a community facility such as a park.

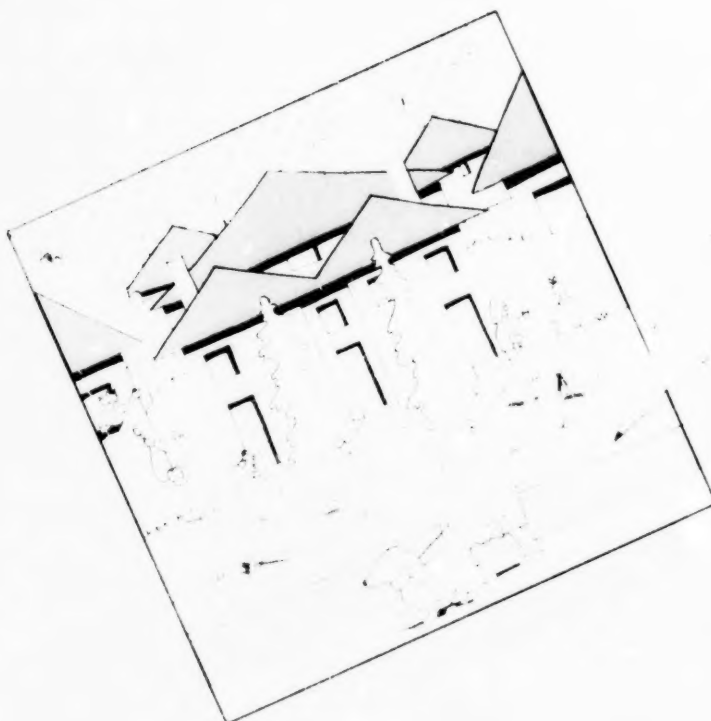
In conclusion, the study helped clarify the realities — and the myths — of single-family residents' feelings about higher-density housing developments near their homes. This understanding is something the City and its citizens must take into the balance as they approach decisions about how to increase the housing choices in Vancouver.

l e s s o n



Variations in neighbourhood response





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